

What is claimed is:

1. A method of providing access to help information
5 relating to components of a computer system, comprising:

accessing a help database having data identifying a plurality of help topics pertaining to a plurality of components of the computer system;

presenting the plurality of help topics in a user
10 interface based on the data in the help database;

detecting a selection of a help topic through the user interface;

retrieving help contents of the selected help topic; and
displaying the retrieved help contents.

2. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 1.

3. A method as in claim 1, wherein the presenting
20 presents the plurality of help topics in accordance with a
taxonomy structure.

4. A method as in claim 3, wherein the help database contains data specifying a mapping between each of the plurality of help topics and a corresponding node of the taxonomy structure.

090344

6. A method as in claim 1, wherein the help database contains data specifying a search keyword associated with said each help topic.

7. A method as in claim 6, wherein the user interface includes an interface element for prompting a selection to perform a keyword search.

8. A method as in claim 1, wherein the help database contains data specifying an index string associated with said each help topic.

9. A method as in claim 8, wherein the user interface includes an interface element presenting an option to view index strings of the help topics.

20 10. A method as in claim 1, wherein the help contents of
said selected help topic are stored in a file written in a
markup language.

11. A method as in claim 1, wherein the help contents of
25 said selected help topic include an active component, and the
displaying includes executing the active component.

13. A method as in claim 11, wherein the active
5 component pertains to problem/incident escalation to a remote
network site.

10

15

17. A method as in claim 1, wherein the retrieving
20 includes obtaining a Unified Resource Locator (URL) associated
with the selected help topic and obtaining the help contents
for the selected help topic based on the Unified Resource
Locator.

18. A computer-readable medium having computer-readable instructions for performing the method of claim 17.

5 20. A method as in claim 17, wherein the Unified
Resource Locator for the selected topic identifies a location
accessible to the computer system through a network.

15 22. A computer-readable medium having computer-readable
instructions for performing the method of claim 21.

23. In a computer system having a graphic user interface including a display and a user interface selection device, a method of providing help contents pertaining to components of a computer system, comprising:

displaying, in a user interface area, help categories on a taxonomy structure, said taxonomy structure categorizing a plurality of help topics pertaining to a plurality of components of the computer system;

upon receiving a selection of a help category on said taxonomy structure, displaying in the user interface area help

upon receiving a selection of one of the displayed help topics, displaying help contents associated with the selected help topic.

10 25. A method as in claim 23, further including
displaying an interface element for prompting a selection of
performing a keyword search for help topics.

26. A method as in claim 23, further including
15 displaying an interface element for prompting a selection of
viewing the help topics by index.

27. A method of providing help contents to a computer system, comprising:

20 receiving a help service update package presenting
modifications to a help service system on the computer system,
said modifications including adding a help topic to the help
service system; and

updating a help service database to include the help
25 topic, the help service database containing data identifying a
plurality of help topics pertaining to different components of
the computer system.

5

10

15

20

25

33. A computer-readable medium having computer-readable instructions for performing the method of claim 32.

10

15

a second field containing data identifying a mapping between the help topic and a taxonomy structure of the help service system for categorizing help topics installed on the help service system for a plurality of components of the computer system.

20

25

38. A method of accessing help contents from an application on a computer system, comprising:

requesting, by the application, retrieval of help
contents at a location indicated by a link, the link including
5 a first portion identifying a namespace of help contents
registered with a help service of the computer system;

invoking the help service to retrieve the help contents
from the location indicated by the link; and
displaying the retrieved help contents.

10

39. A method as in claim 38, wherein the help contents includes an active component.

15

[illegible]